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## NEWS AND NOTES

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### NORTHEASTERN IOWA ASSOCIATION

The English Conference of the Northeastern Iowa Teachers' Association, which met at Waterloo, March 28-30, was well attended, and the papers that were presented aroused lively discussions. Miss Mary A. Eaton, of the Marshalltown High School, read a paper on the subject, "Do the College Entrance Requirements Dominate the English Courses of Iowa High Schools? If So, to What Degree Is Such Domination Beneficial?" The first part of the subject was a question of fact. Replies from forty out of the fifty largest high schools in Iowa showed conclusively that the college-entrance requirements are the basis of the regular course in literature in all of these schools. Some of them depart slightly from the requirements, and some of them do considerably more reading than is suggested in the requirements. The second part of this topic called forth extended discussion, in which there appeared almost as many opinions as there were speakers. Possibly this is the reason why superintendents and principals adopt the college-entrance requirements as a sort of norm; for these requirements are supported by a body of theory and experience that has much "authority."

Mr. S. E. Conybeare, of the Cedar Rapids High School, read an interesting discussion of "The Laboratory Method and Its Application to the Teaching of English Composition." Mr. Conybeare set forth very forcefully his arguments for the necessity of adopting the laboratory method in the teaching of English composition—not the so-called laboratory method that consists in having the pupils write complete original compositions instead of merely correct uniform lists of sentences containing false syntax or faulty rhetoric—but the laboratory method as it is used at present in the sciences, in which there is a double period of time when constructive work is being done. The adoption of such a method would necessitate the employment of twice as many teachers of English composition as are now employed, and would do away almost entirely with the reading of papers after school hours. Professor S. A. Lynch, of the Iowa State Teachers College, who was the leader of the conference, pointed out the fact that even if the laboratory method were adopted for the teaching of original English composition (which is the only kind that counts for much in the high school), the work of the English teacher would still be more difficult than that of the science

teacher. There are several reasons for this, one of which is the fact that no two compositions are alike. The science teacher gives one experimental problem to twenty pupils and they all work it in approximately the same way. His duty is simply to see that they do the work in the desired way and secure the desired uniform result. In English composition this process is reversed: *the pupils present to the teacher twenty different problems*. Each composition is a new problem for the teacher, and he must do a great deal of quick thinking to solve each problem as it is presented. And these problems differ with each class, while the science teacher gives the same problem to successive classes year after year. Such considerations suggest that, in comparison with the science teacher, the teacher of English composition should have smaller classes and more time for rest and recreation. What is the actual situation in most high schools? Is it not time for teachers of English to study their own situation, to present the facts clearly to supervising officers, and to advocate such readjustment of existing conditions as will make their work more effective?

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The *Journal* has received a program of a Shakespearean festival which was held in the Greek Theater of the University of California under the auspices of the English Club of that institution on Saturday, April 13, at 2:30 and 8:15 P.M. Several neighboring high schools participated, each giving a portion of a play. Lowell High School, San Francisco, presented *The Tempest*, part of Act I, scene 2; Act II, scene 2; and Act V (slightly altered). Oakland High School presented Act IV of *The Merchant of Venice*. Berkeley High School presented Act IV of *The Winter's Tale*, to the tune of "Youth's a Stuff Will Not Endure" by the school orchestra. The English Club of the University acted *Henry V*, with certain omissions, under the direction of Mr. Garnet Holme. The occasion is said to have been notable, the acting of the pupils of the high schools being surprisingly good.

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Shakespeare's birthday was celebrated by the Drama League of America with a festival in Lincoln Park, Chicago, on April 23. Eighteen hundred children from the schools were trained to present in appropriate costume, by means of pantomime, scenes from *King Henry V*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Mid-Summer Night's Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Tempest*. The procession passed near the statue of the poet and deposited garlands, while Professor S. H. Clark, of the University of Chicago, as orator read

appropriate passages from the plays. Under the guidance of a character representing Shakespeare himself, the pageant then proceeded to an open space, where the players were presented to Queen Elizabeth, King James, and their courts. The pantomimes and dances followed.

The Drama League had the aid of numerous clubs in the city, of members of the faculty of the Teachers College and of the Art Institute, and also of prominent actors and dramatic critics. Mr. E. H. Sothern and Miss Julia Marlowe gave a special matinee performance for the children. Prizes were awarded for the best essays on Shakespearean topics by pupils from the schools and a number of commemorative portraits were hung. The expenses of the festival were met, in part, by the sale of special post cards presenting scenes from Shakespeare's plays and by the sale of the programs. The cards and programs may be had of the Ralph Seymour Company, Art Institute, Chicago—the cards at five cents each, the programs at ten.

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As announced in the March number of the *Journal*, the chief speakers before the English section of the Schoolmasters' Club of Michigan at Ann Arbor on March 29 were W. L. Comfort of Detroit, Mrs. A. Starr Best of Chicago, J. F. Hosis of Chicago, and E. M. Hopkins of Lawrence, Kan. Mr. Hopkins reported the results so far obtained by his committee as to the relative cost of English work and the various plans which have been suggested for lightening the burden and increasing the efficiency of composition teaching. He showed that even if the number of pupils to the teacher were reduced in English to the level of the sciences, the pro rata cost would still be much less for the former than for the latter. A summary of his address will be printed in the next number of the *Journal*.

The association adopted resolutions indorsing the work of the committee and urging the authorities, including the Bureau of Education at Washington and the Carnegie Foundation, to assist. The Association also voted to join the National Council of Teachers of English.

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The recent educational conference of academies and high schools in co-operation with the University of Chicago was unique. The University had invited the secondary schools to send representatives to visit the college classes, and the conference was devoted to a consideration of the criticisms made by these visitors. Both the departmental meetings and the general meeting were characterized by great good-will, and several valuable suggestions were made. The English Conference voted to recommend: (1) that only the most experienced and efficient

instructors be placed in charge of Freshman college classes; (2) that the lecture method of instruction be subjected to comparative tests to determine whether it is more valuable than recitation and discussion; (3) that much emphasis be placed upon oral composition; and (4) that the University authorities recommend as teachers of English in high schools only those graduates who have had professional preparation for that work. The effort now being made to bring about conditions conducive to closer personal contact between the younger students in the University and their instructors was warmly commended, and these instructors were urged to visit high-school classes. At the general session it was announced that the interscholastic contest in public speaking at the University will hereafter partake of the spontaneous character of that described by Professor Clapp in the April number of the *English Journal*.

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The fiftieth annual convention of the National Education Association will be held in Chicago, July 6 to 12, 1912. There will be two meetings of special interest to teachers of English. On Wednesday, July 10, a regular session of the English Round Table of the Department of Secondary Education will be held. The topic suggested is "Means of Increasing the Efficiency of Instruction in Composition." Papers on "Vocational Themes," "The Laboratory Period," and "Oral Composition" will be read. On the following day a joint conference of English teachers from high schools, normal schools, and colleges will consider the reports of two committees, that on the labor of theme-reading, of which Professor E. M. Hopkins, representing the Modern Language Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, is chairman, and that on articulating school and college, of which Professor J. F. Hosis, representing the English Round Table of the N.E.A. and the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English, is chairman. The report on theme-reading will be followed by a discussion of methods of amelioration. The two sessions together should make a valuable contribution to the discussion of composition teaching, now of chief interest in the English field. The program in full will appear in the next number of the *Journal*.